2 Soledad Brothers Acquitted of Murder

By Leif Erickson 3/28/72
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SAN FRANCISCO, March 27—An all-white jury today acquitted the two surviving Soledad Brothers, black convicts charged with murdering a white prison guard.

The two—John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo—and George Jackson, a third Soledad Brother who died in San Quentin violence last Aug. 21, are the prisoners Angela Davis is charged with plotting to free.

Clutchette, 28, and Drumgo, 26, were accused with the 28-year-old Jackson of beating guard John V. Mills to death Jan. 16, 1970, at Soledad Prison in Monterey County.

The Superior Court jury deliberated the case since Friday night.

The trial had lasted 13 weeks under extraordinary security precautions at the Hall of Justice. Clutchette and Drumgo were flown back and forth each day from San Quentin by helicopter.

When the innocent verdicts were read, Clutchette and Drumgo jumped up and hugged their court-appointed attorneys, Richard Silver and Floyd Silliman.

Doris Maxwell, Clutchette's mother, said, "Oh, thank God. God bless the jury. I am as happy as the first day John was born."

Inez Williams mother of Drumgo, said, "I'm very, very happy and very excited.

"But our fight is not over. Fleeta has been indicted for what happened at San Quentin when Goerge Jackson died. So we have to keep on fighting," Mrs. Williams said.

Drumgo is charged with murder in the Marin County indictment stemming from the San Quentin violence in which Jackson, two other convicts and three guards were killed.

No other charge was pending against Clutchette, who had been scheduled for parole

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FLEETA DRUMGO JOHN CLUTCHETTE
... the two remaining Soledad Brothers

Soledad Brothers Acquitted Of Murdering Prison Guard

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April 20, 1970, before being charged in Mills' death.

The assault in which Mills died came three days after three black Soledad convicts were kille dby the gunfire of guards seeking to break up a prison yard melee among black and white prisoners.

Mills was killed within hours after a county grand jury ruled the three deaths were "justifiable homicide."

The prosecution contended that Mills was beaten with his own flashlight and then tossed from a cell tier to a concrete floor three floors below.

The verdict came at 11:45 a.m. The jury of nine women and three men on Sunday reported themselves deadlocked 9-3.

Four convicts testified they were eyewitnesses to the attack on Mills, and several had testified they saw Jackson hitting Mills with the other two surviving defendants near the death scene. None of the witness said they saw Drumgo or Clutchette striking blows.

Defense lawyers contended that there could have been many convicts at Soledad Prison angry enough to kill a guard.

In San Jose, Miss Davis' attorney, Howard Moore Jr., told newsmen the verdict proved the Soledad trial was "a political frameup from the start."

"It is a complete vindication of the Soledad Brothers," Moore said, "The only thing I regret is that George Jackson did not live to see it."